

What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes (di-a-bee-tees) is an illness that makes it hard for your body to use the food you eat the right way.

Some of the food you eat turns into glucose (glu-kose). Glucose is also called “sugar”, and is your body’s main source of energy. Glucose travels through your body in your blood. Insulin (in-sa-lin) is a substance made in the pancreas (pan-cre-us), a small organ behind your stomach. Insulin helps get the glucose out of the blood and into your cells. Just like a key unlocks a door, insulin is like the key that unlocks the door to the cells in your body, and lets the glucose in to be used as energy.

These things make it more likely that you will get diabetes

- Having family members with diabetes
- Being overweight or obese
- Not being physically active
- Being over the age of 45
- Being a person of color (African American, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian)
- Having high blood pressure
- Having heart disease
- Having a baby over 9 pounds or having diabetes when you were pregnant also makes it more likely that a woman will get diabetes.

These signs may mean that you have diabetes

- Being very thirsty
- Having to urinate a lot
- Feeling very tired or weak
- Having wounds or infections that do not heal
- Having pain, tingling or numbness in your hands or feet
- Having blurry vision
- Losing weight without trying

Talk to your doctor if you have any of these.

How do you know if you have diabetes?

A blood test will tell you if you have diabetes. The blood test can be a “fasting” blood test or a “random” blood test. A fasting test means you have had nothing to eat or drink for 8 hours before the test. A random test means you have had something to eat or drink within 8 hours of the test.

There are 3 types of diabetes

If you have type 1 diabetes, your body does not make any insulin and you must take insulin shots. The insulin shots help to get the glucose out of the blood and into the cells of your body. You can get type 1 diabetes at any time, but most people get it before they are 30 years old.

If you have type 2 diabetes, your body makes insulin, but does not make enough or does not use it the right way. You may have to take pills or insulin to help get the glucose out of the blood and into the cells of your body. You can get type 2 diabetes at any age.

Women who are pregnant can get **gestational** (jest-a-shun-all) diabetes. They may have to take insulin shots to help get the glucose out of the blood and into the cells of their body. This type of diabetes usually goes away after the baby is born, but women who had gestational diabetes have a very good chance of getting type 2 diabetes later on.

Type 1 and type 2 diabetes never go away. There is no cure for diabetes. Eating the right way, exercising, taking diabetes medicine (if needed), and testing your blood sugar will help control diabetes.

If you would like to learn more about diabetes,
contact the Diabetes Association of Greater Cleveland.
Ask to talk with an educator.



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Visit our website at: www.dagc.org